

Makiwara Board Training for Karate

A makiwara board, a padded striking post traditionally used in some karate styles, is one of my most recommended types of training equipment for karate practitioners. It is the most recognizable of the "hojo undo", or "supplemental training equipment", used in the Okinawan fighting methods now known as karate. There are a few different type of makiwara, which share the purpose of helping develop correct technique, power generation, and conditioning of the hands, arms, and feet.

Makiwara can either be purchased very affordably, or you can construct your own if you have access to the needed materials. A makiwara can be attached to a wall, suspended, or freestanding. The Tachi-makiwara (or, freestanding makiwara) is made up of a several foot long post buried in the ground, such that the striking pad will reach about shoulder height. Traditionally, rope is used to bind a pad of rice straw to the top to create a striking surface. (Maki = roll; Wara = straw.) Other materials such as duct tape are suitable, however. Other traditional types of makiwara include age-makiwara (hanging), ude-makiwara (round on all sides), tou-makiwara (bamboo stalks or cane). The smaller and more commonly seen makiwara boards are usually made of a pad that is covered with canvas and fixed to a board, then mounted to a wall. There are some variations, such as clapper and portable makiwara. For more details on all these types and ideas for construction, please view -

<http://www.amerikankangdukwon.org/makiwara.pdf>

The resistance provided by the makiwara when it is struck gets the body used to hard contact and encourages proper form. A poorly formed technique will often bounce off the makiwara because the body was not in correct alignment to transfer power through the technique. When training on the makiwara, you will want to carefully, slowly strike it in such a way that you will to condition your striking tools for delivering techniques, but also the rest of your 'power chain'. This includes your legs, hips, and shoulders. In this way, you train them to coordinate and move in such a way that you can get the most stability and power out of your techniques. These include your open and closed hand strikes, kicks, elbows, and so forth - makiwara training allows for a lot of variety in technique. With enough practice on the board your striking areas will adapt and strengthen the bones, and connective tissues used for the strikes.

While callouses commonly form over the knuckles with enough practice on the makiwara, this is not the goal - it should merely be a side effect. You must take great care in makiwara training, and always use proper technique. While you do want to learn how to strike the makiwara with at least a moderate degree of force, you also want to make sure you learn correct ways to strike it, then take it slowly when doing so. As you progress with makiwara training, you can

gradually increase the speed and force of your strikes. Be sure to use something like Dit Da Jow or similar liniment after training on the makiwara.

Before you begin any training with makiwara or other impact tools, be sure to find a qualified instructor so that he or she can supervise your makiwara training. This will help you to learn control and proper technique in your striking, which will prevent injuries and also make sure you know how to get the most out of your makiwara training. Persons under 16 years of age should avoid hitting the makiwara with excessive force. Always begin striking the makiwara with a low number of light strikes, and always err on the side of caution. If any kind of swelling, bruises, tearing of the skin, etc. happens, cease makiwara training until you have fully healed. Injury prevention is very important to keep in mind as you engage in any kind of physical activity, especially when using makiwara! As such, never engage in makiwara training, or any other kind of training, to the point of over-training or injury. Your health is the most important thing!

As noted before, there are many different types of makiwara. There are many offered online for purchase, but as also noted, it is important to understand the uses of the makiwara, as well as differences between the types of makiwara available. I highly recommend reading the book 'The Art of Hojo Undo' – available in print and for Kindle, via Amazon - for details on these types, as well as training exercises, and even how to construct your own. Having your own custom makiwara may be preferable to purchasing a makiwara board if you need something that has more 'give' or allows for more variety of techniques and footwork to be used (such as an ude-makiwara).

If you would like to use other types of resistance for your striking techniques, please keep the following point in mind. When conditioning your striking tools, you should not use any surface for training that has no "give" or cushion of any kind, or is harder than your own body. This includes trees, bricks, and walls. If you would like to add cushioning though, try wrapping heavy duty rope or old thick carpet around a tree. There are also various types of wall punch pads that can be attached to a wall.

Makiwara training is only one of many methods used in 'hojo undo.' The book 'The Art of Hojo Undo' has a lot of excellent information on this ancient style of training that was developed as part of the Okinawan fighting methods now known as karate. The exercises used in hojo undo are highly functional, and closely relate to the types of movement that you use in kata. The book contains information and diagrams for not only various exercises, but describes related techniques, and how to construct equipment. The author also draws similarities between various techniques used in different styles, how the exercises benefit techniques, and even devotes a chapter to warmup exercises, which is important in injury prevention. Last, but not least, there are some details on the history of

karate as well as the differences between "traditional karate" and today's modernized "sport karate".

The ancient training methods described in this book show you how the old masters taught their students to not only toughen their bodies, but toughen their minds, as well as develop spiritual discipline through dedicated training. This helped them become complete warriors. Not only that, the training methods are of great benefit to almost any martial arts style, even various types of wrestling and other grappling arts, because of the benefit to grip strength and explosiveness.

Primary sources used for this article -
ymaa.com/publishing/books/karate/hojo_undo
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Makiwara
www.americankangdukwon.org/makiwara.pdf

To view pictures and descriptions of 'hojo undo' and 'odd object training' equipment that we have put together, visit my odd object training blog and click on the link near the top that says 'Our Hojo Undo and odd object training equipment (pictures)' -

<http://www.oddoobjecttraining.com>